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ENGLAND'S HOPE

HEAVENLY SUNSHINE

REV^d B. L. WITTS . M. A

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ENGLAND'S HOPE
OR
HEZEKIAH'S DELIVERANCE

FROM ASSYRIAN DOMINATION.

AND THE
ETERNAL SUNSHINE
OF
HEAVENLY GLORY.

*Two Sermons, preached in St. Chrysostom's Church, Everton,
(after many years absence)*

BY

REV. B. L. WITTS, M.A.,

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AUTHOR OF "THE TWO SACRAMENTS," "HOLINESS TO THE LORD," &c.

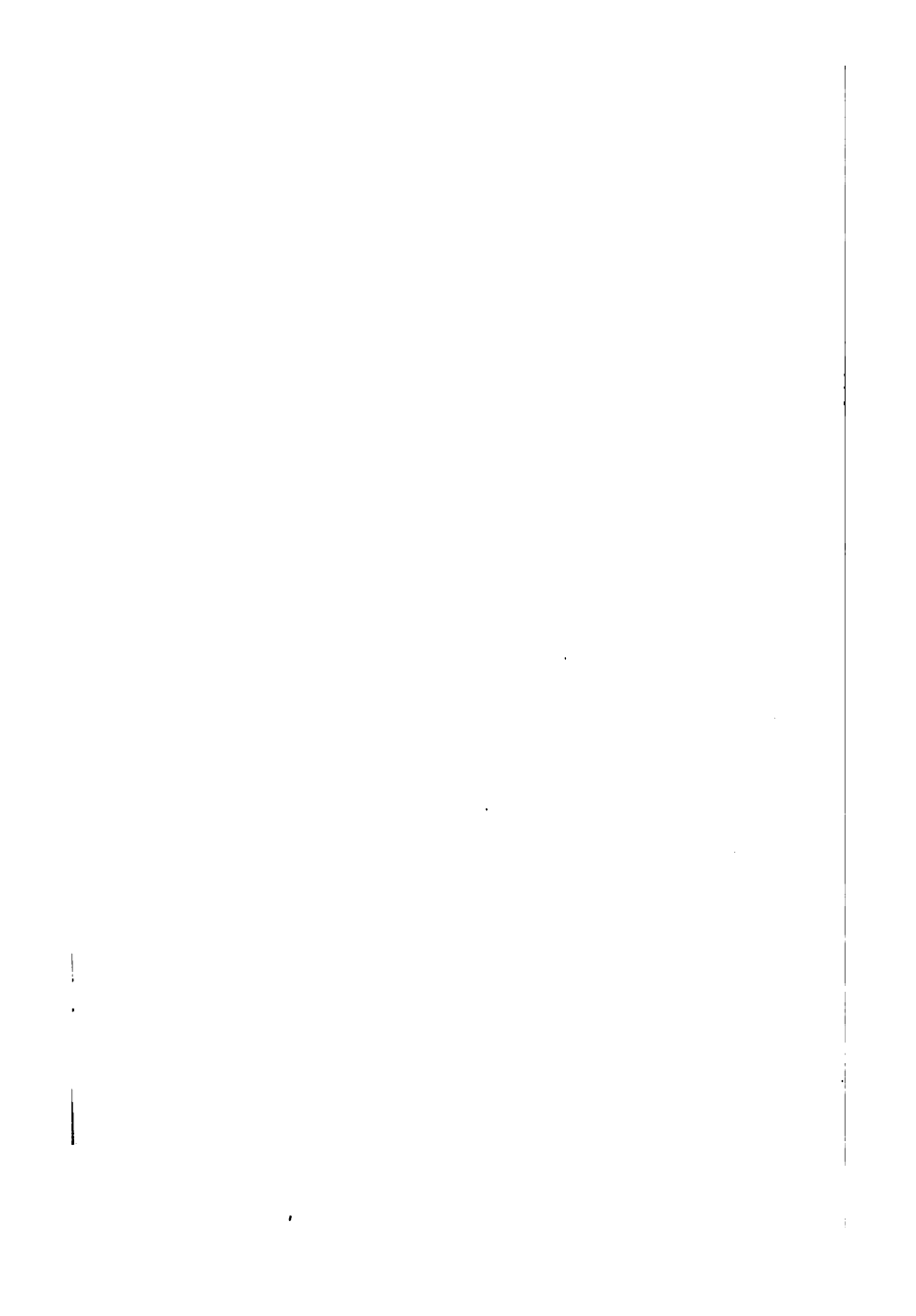
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PREFACE.

The Author does not adventure these discourses on account of any intrinsic merit they possess, but for the excellence of the object for which they are published.

The proceeds, if any, will be given to the Schools of the district, which are endeared to the Author by many sacred associations. He is thankful to find them much enlarged and in so flourishing a state. His earnest prayer is offered that the presiding Minister, the Committees of management, and the several Teachers, may live to see, or have faith to believe, that God's blessing has rested, and will continue to rest, upon their prayerful and persevering labours.

NEW BRIGHTON, CHESHIRE.

Sep. 23, 1854.

Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee, save us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only.

2 KINGS, XIX. 19.

SERMONS of a doctrinal character have their use in teaching men what is the will of God, and it is from a knowledge of that will, that precepts to model practice are deduced. To preach doctrine practically, and practice doctrinally, is the highest style of sermon writing. The bulk of this discourse, however, is neither doctrinal nor practical, but *historical and expository*. It is an exposition of the history of king Hezekiah's deliverance from the power of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and is chosen because the subject has been brought before us in the first lesson of this morning's service.* May it be instructive, and may the concluding remarks, which are practical, be owned and blessed of God.

* Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, king of Judah, came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them. He laid Hezekiah under tribute, and so great was the sum, viz:—three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold, * that, in the impoverished state of the nation, in order to pay it, he had recourse to the same expedient to which, on one occasion, his father Ahaz resorted; he cut off the gold, which, at the commencement of his reign, he had re-placed to embellish the doors and pillars of the holy temple.†

In this he was doubtless blame-worthy, he should have refused to pay, or found some other means of paying it. Although, as it appears from the history, the tribute money was duly paid, yet notwithstanding, after a lapse of about three years, the king of Assyria, without any provocation, sends an armed host against Jerusalem. The king's ambassadors,

* The weight of a Jewish talent, according to Dr. Arbuthnot, was 113lbs. 10oz. 1dwt. 10½grains troy weight.

A talent of silver	=	£342	3	9
A talent of gold	=	54,752	0	0
300 talents of silver	=	102,656	5	0
30 talents of gold	=	1,642,560	0	0

Total tribute in English money was £1,745,216 5 0

† 1 Kings vi. 32. 2 Chron. xxviii. 21, 24, and xxix. 3.

Tartan and Rabsaris and Rabshakeh, seek an interview with Hezekiah. The king declines trusting himself with his domineering invaders, and appoints commissioners: he orders Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to meet these three captains and receive their message. They come charged with rebuke, insult, and blasphemy. Hezekiah will not admit the Assyrian host within his walls—this is construed into rebellion! With pompous words, Hezekiah's counsel and strength for a war, with such a king as the great king of Assyria, is questioned. "Thou sayest," saith Rabshakeh, in behalf of his master, who was then warring against Lachish,* "but they are but vain words—I have counsel and strength for the war: now, on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?" He accused him of trusting upon Egypt for help, when such was not the fact. Hoshea, king of Israel, had indeed confided in Egypt, and had, alas, found the simile of the staff of the bruised reed to be but too true a description of Egypt's help, or rather Egypt's weakness: but the godly Hezekiah, king of Judah, trusted not in an arm of flesh; he knew the truth of the saying, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in man.

* 2 Chron. xxxii. 9.

It is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in princes." (Psalm cxviii. 8, 9.) † He could, and doubtless did say with David, "Through God we shall do valiantly: for He it is who shall tread down our enemies." * This pious confidence in God the infidel Rabshakeh despised, and when entreated to utter his blasphemy in the Syrian language, which was not understood by the common people in Jerusalem, he persisted in speaking in Hebrew, the vulgar tongue; and tried to intimidate them, by describing, in obscene language, the distress they might experience from famine during a long siege: and calling loudly to excite them to rebellion, said, on behalf of his master, "*Let not Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand; neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, the Lord will surely deliver us; and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria;*" and then attributing all his past military success to the interference of his heathen deities, which were no gods, Sennacherib impiously contrasts

† "Youthful readers may have this truth more firmly fixed in their minds, by being informed that the former of these verses is the *middle verse* in the whole Bible; namely, the fifteen thousand five hundred and eighty-seventh!

* Psalm lx. 12.

their power with the Almightyness of the Lord God of heaven and earth. *Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand.* Hezekiah was a wise and a prudent, as well as a pious prince, therefore, foreseeing the language Rabshakeh would be ordered to employ, he counselled his envoys and commanded his people to hold their peace, lest they should get engaged in a reviling contention, and thus provoke his enemies to further impiety. *But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, answer him not.* In abhorrence, however, of his blasphemy, and in grief for the afflicted estate of the nation, they rent their clothes, as their manner was, and returned to Hezekiah, who also, when he heard what had passed, did likewise; moreover, he covered himself with sack cloth, and fasted and prayed, and took an early opportunity of attending divine worship in the house of God. He then sent for Isaiah who was the prophet of the day, and who, for about fifty years, had been prophesying in Judah, and he rehearsed in his ears "the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria

his master had sent to reproach the living God." This is a day of trouble, and of rebuke and blasphemy, he is understood to say, and alas! it may be, the Lord will permit the threats of Rabshakeh to be performed, wherefore lift thou up thy voice in prayer to God, for the remnant of the Jews who are left in Judah. Israel hath been already destroyed and led into captivity.* Judah hath been much distressed, and now the remnant that is left is in danger; wherefore, O thou man of God, thou prophet of the most highest, lift thou up thine heart in prayer, that we perish not.

Observe the king's pious reverence for God's servant, and his faith in the efficacy of prayer. Calmly, and with composure, the aged prophet listened to the agitated entreaty of the king's servants, and then with a firm and solemn voice replied, *Thus shall ye say unto your master, thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.*

In explanation of the word "blast," be it remarked that the expression does not allude to the

* By Shalmeneser, Sennacherib's Father, see chap. xviii. 9-12.

manner in which the Assyrian army was finally destroyed, as some have supposed. Mr. Scott says, that he, with others, thinks it signifies that God would fill Sennacherib's heart with terror, by some supernatural agent,—“ I will infuse a spirit into him;” and Bishop Lowth says, “the words never signify anything but putting a spirit into a person, and in this case, it was a spirit of fear which was infused.”*

So Rabshakeh returned to Assyria, and found his ambitious sovereign had *returned to his own land*, according to the word of the Lord, and had gone forth to engage himself in another war with Libnah. Whether he was victorious at Lachish we have no information, neither is there any record of his success against Libnah; all we know is that his rage against Judah and the Lord of Hosts was unbounded. *He wrote letters to rail on the Lord God of Israel*—he sent them by *messengers* to present to Hezekiah—he followed himself with a great army, determined to make a desperate effort to gain his object—the entire subjugation of Judah.

The contents of one letter, which breathes insult, rebuke, and blasphemy, is as follows :—*Let not thy*

* In support of this view, the translation of the passage in an old black letter edition of the Bible, of the date 1551, is appended,—“ Beholde I will put him in another mynde, and he shall heare tidynges, and so returne to his own lande,

God in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Behold thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed:—as Gozan and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden, which were in Thelasar? Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivah?

Concerned at the threats and impieties it contained, the pious king receives the summons.

Now, mark his noble courage—his faith in God—his royal confidence—his hope in prayer: Oh! what a pattern to modern kings, warriors, senators, yea, and all private christians. Did he blow the trumpet; sound the alarm; mount his chariot; and with a general's searching eye "walk about Zion, and go round about her, counting the towers thereof; marking well her bulwarks." (Psalm xlviii.) Watching the enemies approach, did he observe their

and I will brynge to passe, that he shall fall upon the swearde, euen in his owne lande."

The marginal *reflection* in the later editions of the Geneva, or "Breeches Bible," as it is vulgarly called, printed at Geneva, 1569, is worth being transcribed,—“The Lord can with one blast blowe away all the strength of man, and turne it into dust.”

strong and his own weak points, and give orders accordingly ; placing here bowmen ; there spearmen ; here hanging bags of sand to deaden the force of the enemies rams ; there collecting stones to place in his own catapults, and to cast upon the enemies tortoises ? He might have done all this, and probably he did, but, he *trusted* not to his own foresight, or preparations, or to his people's valour. The weapons of Hezekiah's warfare were such as we should do well more frequently to resort unto in times of personal, family, or public distress. They were "*not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.*" He had doubtless imbibed the spirit of the sixty-second and hundred and eighteenth Psalms, in both of which he must have found many words of comfort. David's conduct, with Goliath of Gath, was a counterpart of Hezekiah's.* Would that all commanders were influenced by his spirit ! His address to his captains is on record, and it breathes a mixture of valour and piety, which is most noble ;— "*Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed, for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him ; for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh ; but with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight our battles.*" (2 Chronicles, xxxii. 7, 8.) But before Hezekiah's

* 1 Samuel, xvii. 45, 46, 47.

downcast spirit had risen in faith and hope, he performed an act of devotion which God accepted and honoured, and to which indeed we may attribute, instrumentally, his future deliverance. Hezekiah went to the strong for strength. Like his great antitype, Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, who vanquished Satan, the prince of darkness, Hezekiah offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save him, and was heard, in that he feared; (Hebrews, v.) for it is written, that conferring not with flesh and blood, no not even on this occasion with the Prophet Isaiah himself, he straightway *went up into the house of the Lord, and spread the letter before the Lord*, and there on bended knees he poured out his heart in prayer to God. And a most striking prayer it was; God's oneness—His peculiar care of Israel—His existence as God, and as the only true God, in contradistinction to the Assyrian false gods—His universality—His creative power—His retributive justice—His character as a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God, and the accession of glory among the nations which would attend the protection of His people Israel: these are the attributes, doctrines, arguments, motives, mentioned and pleaded by the pious king, in this solemn prayer, on this momentous occasion; an occasion on which you may almost say, the future destiny of Judaism and Christ-

ianity hung as by a thread. The account of Hezekiah's pious conduct, and the prayer he uttered, is given in these words ;—*And Hezekiah received the letter at the hand of the messengers, and read it, and Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord, and Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwelleth between the Cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth ; thou hast made Heaven and Earth. Lord, bow down Thine ear, and hear : open, Lord, Thine eyes, and see : and hear the words of Sennacherib, who hath sent him to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations, and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire ; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone ; therefore they have destroyed them. Now, therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, and that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only.* This prayer being ended, the king retired to his palace, and doubtless experienced a serenity of mind, which faith and hope alone can supply. In an *immediate* answer we behold the gracious fulfilment of God's promise to hear and answer humble, believing prayer. "*Thus saith the Lord God of Israel,*" was the gracious reply Isaiah was authorized to communicate, "*That which*

thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, I have heard ;" that is, I have heard, and I will perform all thy desire. Blessed promise for faith to rest upon in a time of deep anxiety ! How sweet is the stillness of a calm, after the violence of a mighty tempest has passed ! This must Hezekiah have felt.

The Lord then proceeds to speak of the Jewish Church, under that off-mentioned metaphor of a virgin or a bride, and addressing Sennacherib, makes the Church say she despises all his threatenings. The Almighty, then strongly and at some length reproves him for his pride, vain-glory, and boasting of his past military success ; of the multitude of his chariots ; of the valour of his armies ; of the help of his idols ; and of the terror he has infused into his enemies. *But, saith the Lord, I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.* And because his rage was so great, God figuratively describes the ease with which He will tame him, even as an infuriated animal is tamed, and would lead him whither he would not. This is described in the nine verses, from verse twenty to twenty-eight. The three following verses are addressed to Hezekiah. A sign of an abundant harvest is given him that his deliverance shall be effected, the zeal of the Lord of Hosts would accomplish this—*Therefore, thus saith the*

Lord concerning the king of Assyria, is the concluding declaration: He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

What was the result? Did God keep His word? How did He accomplish His design? In very truth, not an arrow was shot on either side, and yet the Assyrian army was totally destroyed! Not a Jewish arm was uplifted—not a drop of Assyrian blood was spilt—no shouts of war were uttered—no cries of victory given—no groans of death heard—and yet, one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians lay dead before Jerusalem's lofty walls! With such a profound silence did the devastation proceed, that the Israelites were not aware, till the morning, of the miraculous victory they had gained. God's power, God's truthfulness, God's faithfulness—His determination to punish sinners—His resolution to preserve those that fear and trust Him, is expressed or implied in the words which describe the fearful overthrow: "*And it came to pass that night, that the Angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and fourscore*

*and five thousand : and when they arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses."**

What an awful judgment was this ! how terrific ! What a fearful delineation of the sterner attributes of the Deity—his hatred of sin, and his determination to punish infidelity and blasphemy. Sennacherib, the moving spring of the whole expedition, is wonderfully preserved from the general destruction—but herein I mark the special providence of God

* The rationalist will tell us that this, if true, was the result of a natural cause. That the Simoon, or the hot burning wind with clouds of sand, which is so common in the East, was the means of their destruction ; and he might fortify his argument by the assertion that the word " Angel," or Spirit, also means *wind*, and that the same Hebrew word is used for "blast" in verse 7, as for " Angel " in verse 35, and therefore, it was no superhuman, but a natural yet unfortunate, event which caused their destruction. In reply, we ask, *who causeth the strong wind to rise ? who scattereth the east wind upon the earth ?* (Job xxxviii. 24.) Doth not He, the Lord God ?—Whether, therefore, it was an Angel, an express messenger from Heaven, who smote them with some instantaneous death, as in the case of the first-born in Egypt ; or whether it was a Simoon raised by God Himself ; or whether it was a plague, or paralysis, or whatever it was, it matters not one iota. *It was the hand of God*, whether He worked *with* an instrument, or *without* one. Here is the basis for faith to rest upon. Babylon was overwhelmed by "a destroying wind,"—(see Jeremiah li. 1, 36, 37 ;) therefore it is not impossible that a Simoon was the destructive agent employed of God in the present case. We admit the rationalist's premises, but we deny his conclusions.

overruling the event for a special purpose. God had foretold that *he should fall by the sword in his own land*, and so it actually came to pass—"hath He said, and shall He not do it." *So Sennacherib went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh*—and as he was blindly following his old superstitions, unconverted by the manifest token he had so recently beheld of the superiority of the Lord God of Israel, his sons conspired against him, and smote him with the edge of the sword—thus verifying the word of prophecy.

It is interesting and instructive, to trace the effects produced among the neighbouring nations by this signal deliverance. It was exactly similar to what took place in the early Christian Church when Ananias and Sapphira suffered for their hypocrisy. We then read that great fear came upon the Church, and upon all who heard of it, and that the people magnified the Apostles, and that multitudes, both of men and women, were added to the Lord.* So it was in the present case. A blessed result ensued. What was death to some produced life to others. The Lord's name was praised, from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same—for it is written, "*Many brought gifts unto the Lord to Jerusalem, and presents to king Hezekiah, so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.*" (2 Chron. xxxii. 23.) (Compare Isaiah's account, chap. xxxvi. xxxvii.)

* Acts v. 11, 14.

What a striking illustration does this whole history present of the truth of the blessed Virgin Mary's words, "*God hath put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the humble and meek. He hath shewed strength with his arm: He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He remembering His mercy, hath holpen his servant Israel; as He promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed, for ever.*"

In conclusion, let us enquire what are the practical remarks, deducible from this interesting and thrilling history.

I might speak in condemning terms of Sennacherib's character, and warn you against indulging in a proud, vain-glorious, boasting disposition; and I might combine with it a solemn warning to modern Pharisees, Deists, and Infidels: or I might treat the subject with a view to Christian Missions, and shew you how some of the heathen nations, with whom England has from time to time been at war, have carried on their warfare exactly in the same spirit as Sennacherib did his, and like him been defeated; how that Brahma, Vishna, and Siva, are as falsely called gods, as the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah: and how Chrisna and Buddha have been as powerless to save the Chinese and Singalese and Hindoos, as the gods of Hamath and Arpad were to

deliver Jerusalem into the hands of Sennacherib, and I might beg your interest in behalf of Church Missions, and ask you to do what in you lies, to send the Gospel to the heathen.* Or, I might, with greater advantage, remind you of the disastrous war in which our Queen and country is at this moment engaged, and how, in the pious spirit of Hezekiah, the nation commenced, and, I trust, is pursuing it.

We have been now for some months engaged in hostilities with the largest empire in Europe. The war seems to have been forced upon us most unwillingly. We have endeavoured to preserve peace by lengthened negotiations; we have tried to reason the oppressor out of his ambition, and to induce him to let the oppressed go free—but all to no purpose. In spite of all remonstrance, and with a blindness which pride alone can explain, he entered the Turkish dominions, “encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself;” but defeat has been his lot. Our vigorous efforts are now being

* “Of the host of Hindoo divinities, Brahma, Vishna, and Siva, are the most exalted. Brahma is denominated the creator, Vishna the preserver, and Siva the destroyer. Whenever we seek to ascertain the definite and precise ideas of the Hindoos in religion, the subject eludes our grasp. All is loose, vague, wavering, obscure, and inconsistent. Chrisna and Buddha are names given to the supposed 8th and 9th Avatar, or incarnation of Vishna.” See history of British India, by James Mill, Esq. Book ii. chap. 6.

directed to enforce peace, by guarantees of no equivocal character—*material guarantees* as they have been termed.

To secure a settled peace is our object, and with the aid of "the very God of peace," we hope it will soon be obtained. We abhor war. It is not the genius of our Isle. It is a hideous monster. The giant murderer of thousands of the human race, a cruel tyrant who has "hurled to Pluto's gloomy reign, the souls of mighty men untimely slain." What scenes of carnage, rapine, desolation and woe, those do witness, who engage in war. "Oh! war, war, horrid war!"* What man is there among you, who, if he stood on a field which was once the scene of an angry struggle for mastery, would not feel his spirit awed and impressed with the most solemn feelings. I have stood, as perhaps have some of you, on Waterloo's plain, and traversed the scene of Wellington's last and crowning victory, and awful was the thought, that beneath that soil, lay side by side, the remains of thousands of Europe's noblest sons. There lay sepulchred the dust of two mighty nations, then engaged in deadly war, now, blessed be God, united, and for ever united, I hope and pray, in close and friendly union. What a fearful contrast will be presented between the sound of the trumpet which summons

* A dying exclamation of the late Lord Hill.

troops to action, and the loud blast of that Archangel's voice, which shall summon all, friends and foes, before the judgment seat of the Prince of Peace. Millions upon millions shall crowd together forgetful of past enmity and strife, each intent upon his own coming trial, anxious to hear his own verdict. There is something awfully thrilling in the contrast, or resemblance, call it which you will, between the confused din, and pealing thunder, in which a dying warrior sinks to his grave, and the one short, loud, piercing blast, which shall penetrate into earth's deepest recess, and sea's lowest gulph, and call from death's slumber, the hosts which that antagonist hath slain, from the death of Abel, to the last of Adam's race. Must not the most indifferent regard this subject with awe and interest. How soon we may hear of an engagement by land, equal to that of Waterloo, or by sea to Trafalgar, none can tell, but we all know full well, that we are on the very eve of such a dire event, and the probability is, that before now, the first ship has landed on the shores of the Crimea, and that the destinies of Europe are hastening to their accomplishment * A few days will materially alter the aspect of affairs. What if our arms are unsuccessful! May God forbid it. *What then is our hope? truly our hope,*

* The expedition was to sail from Varna, September 2nd, this Sermon was preached, September 10.

Lord, is in Thee! Hezekiah found refuge in prayer to God, and we must do likewise. Our gracious Sovereign has acted in the spirit of the king of Judah. She *proclaimed a fast, called a solemn assembly, gathered the people*, and encouraged them to cry, "Spare us good Lord," give not thine heritage to reproach, that our enemies should rule over us, and say "Where is now their God." And doubtless on that, and on many subsequent occasions, praying hearts have *spread before the Lord*, the several treatise and negotiations, and prayed that the Lord would bow down His ear and hear the nation's prayer, and save us out of the hand of our enemies, and cause all the kingdoms of the earth to know that we place our confidence, not in our improved implements of war, or our numbers, or our skill, or our discipline, but IN GOD ALONE, WHO IS "THE ONLY GIVER OF ALL VICTORY," and that the cause we are struggling for is a just and an honorable one. Here is our hope; here is our confidence; therefore do we say, "give peace in our time, O Lord, because there is none other that fighteth for us, but thou only, O God." The battle is the Lord's, and vain is the help of man! Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee, save us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only.

Prayer, then brethren, must be our stronghold. Who can tell the achievements of faithful intercessory

prayer? It has done wonders in time past; and the Lord's hand is not shortened that He cannot now save, nor His ear closed that He will not hear; He is now, as ever, a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God. Let us each, individually then, make it a subject of earnest prayer, that our arms may be crowned with success, with the least possible bloodshed on our own side, as well as on the part of the enemy. Try to realize the fact that each man that falls on either side, is an immortal being, and possesses a soul which will endure for ever in a state of bliss or woe; and pray that those who fall may be the most prepared to die; and that those who are wounded, or who escape, may be so deeply affected by the awful scenes they will witness, that they may become better men in future; and finally, pray that God, "who is God alone, the God of all the kingdoms of the earth," may overrule this sad calamity, for the future welfare of all the nations of Europe, who are engaged in the struggle, and that the time foretold by Isaiah, may speedily arrive, when swords shall be beat into plow-shares, and spears into pruning-hooks, and nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor learn war any more. (Isaiah ii. 4.) *

* There is good ground for believing, that there are *thousands* of praying souls in our army and navy. In the Black Sea alone, it has been publicly stated, that there are in the army 800 British officers, and in the navy 805, who have

But, brethren, amidst all the varied events that are passing on the vast world's surface. The wars and rumours of wars—the fearful ravages of cholera, pestilence, and famine—the tide of emigration—nations springing up in a day—the vast spread of commerce—the extention of Christianity in heathen nations—the spread of vice, immorality, and infidelity in our own—amidst domestic cares, joys, or sorrows, and private worldly interests; in the midst of all that is encouraging and depressing—worldwide, national, and local; let me conclude with one word of counsel to all I have now the privilege of addressing, and that is, *endeavour to disentangle yourselves from the mass of human kind, and endeavour to view yourselves as single units in God's creation*; and remember that you each have an immortal soul, for which the blessed Redeemer consented to die; and that one day you each, individually, as well as collectively, must stand before the judgment seat of Christ, to be judged according to that which you have done, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Prepare,

formed themselves into a *prayer union*, and engaged themselves to intercede for one another, and for their country's safety.

The following extract from a letter of a sailor in the Baltic will be interesting—"We have thirty or forty of God's people on board, and two officers. We have prayer meetings every night; and preaching on the sabbath. We meet in the Gunner's store-room: we have happy seasons there. There is not so much swearing as there used to be."

then, to meet your God. Repent of all your sins, negligences, and ignorances. Exercise firm faith in the Redeemer's merits. Pray without ceasing, for your own soul, for the souls of your friends, for your country's welfare. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Would that the Spirit of the Lord might reach the inmost heart of some persons now addressed, who are living in sin and worldliness, and might cause them to repent and be converted, and saved through the blood of Christ, for ever: and may those who are living godly in Christ Jesus, be kept blameless to the end.

As one, who many years ago,* was connected by the highest and tenderest endearments with this locality, who spent the first and warmest hours of his ministerial life amidst the, then, rustic fields, now crowded with human habitations, of this district, whose voice was then heard in a small and humble school room—how has one become a thousand—as one who hopes that even there some souls were taught to sing the Redeemer's praise, who are now Christ's jewels in His never fading crown; by all that is pleasing in past reflection, and all that is solemn in future expectation, he thanks God that he

* The Author was ordained Curate to the late respected and beloved Incumbent of St. George's, Rev. R. P. Buddicom, in July, 1840, and quitted the Curacy in August, 1842.

is permitted to address those now assembled in this spacious and handsome edifice, whose glory far surpasses that of the former house, and is an object of general, nay, almost universal admiration.

As one whose mind is filled with such considerations, I conclude with an earnest prayer, that all here present may have grace from on high to remember their great responsibilities as British subjects, and British christians; and may press towards the mark for the prize of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus; and that at the great day of reckoning, the shepherds and the flock; the teachers and the taught; may meet before the throne of Heaven, clothed in white, carrying palms of victory, wearing crowns of glory, and singing songs of praise, in honor of that Saviour they have loved and served on earth.

And now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

AND THERE SHALL BE NO NIGHT THERE.

(Rev. xxii. 5.)

THESE words are meant to describe, in negative terms, Heavens brightness and glory. The total absence of darkness proves the perpetual presence of light. What that state will be, which is here negatively described, no human being can possibly foretell. That it will be one of infinite happiness every saint of God has a firm belief. Would that each of us, my dear brethren, had a good hope through grace that our names were written in the Lamb's book of life. If with godly sorrow and true faith we have drawn nigh unto Christ, and found pardon and peace and holiness through his blood, we may be *sure* that they are there written; for the Saviour saith, that all that hear His words, and believe in God, *have* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but have passed from death unto life. (John v. 24.)

When the children of Israel were standing in the wilderness of Paran, which was close to the "promised land," whither they were journeying, God ordered Moses to select certain men to go into the land of Canaan to explore, and bring back a report of it. The spies, as the twelve men selected were called, returned with their answers : ten were faithless and gave an evil report of the land—two only, Caleb and Joshua, gave a true report. They shewed the fruits thereof, and urged the congregation of Israel to take possession of it at once ; but they were fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and idolaters, and would not for fear of hardships enter into that good land ; therefore God caused them to fall in the wilderness during forty years. (Numbers. xiii.)

Now, my brethren, every one must see in God's dealings with Israel a great similarity, to His dealings with the Christian Church now. Almost every thing under the old dispensation was a type or figure of something to be revealed more fully under the new. Therefore, we may remark that God sending spies to explore the land of Canaan, (which is universally admitted to be a type of Heaven), shews His desire that we, who are journeying Heavenward, should have some knowledge of what that rest is which remaineth for the people of God. (Hebrews iv.)

For this purpose, in old time, He sent His servants the prophets. He has caused the Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. He has sent His Son to describe more plainly the glory of the invisible world. He carried St. Paul in a vision up to Paradise. He gave St. John Revelations which he was to declare unto us ; and ever since, He has sent Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ—the Church.

We, beloved brethren, are Ambassadors for Christ. Oh! may we be faithful in our embassy, rightly dividing the word of God, and like Caleb and Joshua give to you a good report of the land we have searched. Oh! it is a glorious land! God forbid that you should be a faithless and stubborn generation, like Israel of old. Eternity is before you—Heaven is in view—You are as it were on the borders of the promised land—Life is uncertain—Time is short—Harden not your hearts, but labour to enter into Heaven's rest, lest you fall after the example of Israel's unbelief. (Hebrews iii.)

It is said in our text that "there is no night there." This is a remarkable expression. It is an attempt, in negative terms, to describe the bright glory of the celestial state. By reason of God's infinite majesty, and Heaven's unutterable bliss,

the finite mind of man is thought to be more capable of grasping what Heaven *is not*, than what *it is*; and therefore it is said "there is no night there."

Now, by the aid of God's enlightening Spirit, let us enquire what is probably intended by this expression.

But, first, let me ask a question to illustrate our subject, in reference to the motion of our earth round the sun. Would it be a blessing were God so to appoint it, that this earth should gradually cease to move? Suppose the earth were to stop its course when the sun was at its meridian, that is at noon-day, it would of course continually shine upon us; clouds, as at present, might occasionally darken its view, but there would be no night here.

Suppose this really were to happen, would our happiness be increased thereby? The novelty of the circumstance would attract our wonder for a few days; we should be forced to retire to rest in broad daylight; we should rise again, and find the sun exactly in the same position in the Heavens we left it; and so it would be day and day and year by year, until the earth resumed her course. So far from increasing our happiness, I think you will agree with me, that the uncertainty and irregularity of all our movements social, physical, and political, would be unendurable. The monotony would be

irksome in the extreme. Vegetation would be hindered or quite destroyed, there would be no seasons, so that I think we must all acknowledge that the constant presence of the sun's rays on our hemisphere would not add to our happiness, so that we could wish that there was no night here.

Now, before we proceed to our enquiry, let us consider *what man really is*, and from whence his chief pleasures spring.

It is not so much external objects, or difference of climate, or situation, or circumstances in life, which either increase or diminish a man's happiness. The mind, or the soul, is really the man, and this is that part of him which feels pleasure or pain, and although it be true that the soul is much acted upon through the senses of the body, yet it has a spring of enjoyment within itself which is entirely independent of the body. The body and soul are two separate and distinct things, they are united now, but they will be disunited by death, and will again be re-united at judgment, and the natural body will become a spiritual body, and the saints will be made capable of enjoying a spiritual state of existence in that region of bliss which we commonly term Heaven.

We do err, my brethren, in speaking of Heaven as a *place* of holiness and happiness—it ought

more properly to be called a *state* of holiness and happiness, a state of being in which the soul of every true believer will be made perfectly free from the effects of sin, and enjoy perpetual peace and holiness with God.

Therefore from what has been advanced on the nature of man's soul in connection with his body, its comparative independence of the body for its happiness; on the spiritual and holy state of Heaven; on the small influence which external objects and circumstances necessarily exert on the mind, as illustrated in the constant presence of the sun's rays upon this earth; we infer that when St. John was taught of God to inform us that in Heaven there should be *no night*, he never meant us to take the words in their literal signification, true as the idea may be, but it is evident that he was speaking figuratively and symbolically, and that our minds must look forward to blessings of a higher and nobler and more spiritual kind than appears at first sight, from the words "there shall be no night there."

Well, then, you anxiously ask, what are these blessings which are thus clouded from our view, and wrapped in figures and symbols? Why, we take night to be a symbol of fatigue, peril, ignorance, sin, and death. When, therefore, it is said that in Heaven

there is no night, we may take it to mean there is no fatigue, peril, ignorance, sin, or death there.

Is there no fatigue in Heaven? happy prospect! how different to earth's toil. See yonder husbandman returning home through the pleasant fields, after the fatigue of a long hot summer's day's work; how he rejoices at the return of night. He lays his weary bones to rest, and if he is a pious man, he blesses God that he has "where to lay his head." See another man in a different class of life, one whose *mind* has been all day in constant exercise. He is a member of one of the learned professions. How refreshing is the return of evening. To the bosom of his family he repairs, and by domestic endearments, or lighter studies, finds that relaxation which is absolutely necessary for his health, both of mind and body; and then, balmy sleep, nature's sweet restorer, refreshes all mankind for to-morrow's toil.

But, praised be God, in Heaven there will be no fatigue—no lassitude—no throbbing of temples from excessive thought—no aching of bones from excessive labour: the bodies of the saints which at death are sown in corruption and weakness, will be raised in incorruption and power; their redeemed bodies will possess another principle; be governed by other laws; have a totally different constitution; they will become so like the soul, that they will almost, I fancy,

absorb themselves into the soul, when they become, —what baffles my mind to comprehend—spiritual bodies. The souls of the redeemed will surely never grow weary of singing their Redeemer's praise ! Is it not expressly said of the Heavenly Host, that “ they *rest not* day and night saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” Man, who is now at his best and holiest estate sadly imperfect, will then become beautifully perfect. Fatigue and weakness being marks of imperfection, will hereafter be unknown. He has had on earth his days of labour and his nights of weariness. In Heaven he shall enjoy eternal rest in the presence of his God. “ *There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.*” There is no night there.

Again, night is a symbol of *peril and danger*. There is no peril or danger in Heaven, consequently “no night there.” In this evil world we are surrounded by wicked and designing men. Some like beasts and birds of prey, would be devouring one another more than, alas, they now do, if stringent human laws were not framed and enforced to deter them. And is it not especially in the night time that men meditate upon their dark deeds, and then perpetrate their crimes. They foolishly say, “shall not the darkness cover us ?” Tush, say they, no one shall see

it, forgetting that the allseeing eye of the Almighty is fixed upon them. There goes the thief—there sits the profane talker and swearer—there the nervous and excited gambler—there reels home the drunkard—there stands at the corner of the street the strange woman, once perhaps cruelly deceived, now as cruelly deceiving; “her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.” (Proverbs vii, 27.) All these select the night time to practice their deeds of darkness, and to lead the unwary into the paths of sin. So that night is the time when the innocent are most exposed to peril and danger. And when is fire, storm, and tempest; thunder, and lightning, so terrific as when it comes in the stillness of night? But in Heaven there will be no cause for fear of any kind, either from wicked men, or from devouring elements. “There the wicked cease from troubling.” There they enter not. The thunders which come from the throne of God will produce no alarm to the saints, for love will then be perfected, and perfect love, we know, casteth out fear, for fear hath torment. (1 John iv. 18.) Therefore in Heaven there will be no peril, no danger, no fear, *no night there.*

Again, night is a symbol of *ignorance*.

There appears a thick veil of doubt and uncertainty over the minds of men with regard to eternal

things ; even those who are considerably enlightened by the Holy Ghost, only see through a glass darkly, while others who are but partially or not at all enlightened, have but little idea of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, of themselves, of their duties either towards God or man, or of the glories which are to be revealed hereafter. But if any one has sufficient knowledge of his own sinfulness, and sufficient sincerity and humility, and grace to confess and repent of it, and has firm faith in the blood of the eternal covenant, that man shall inherit eternal life, and *then* his mind will be so enlarged, as ages roll on ages, that what he knows not now he shall know hereafter—he shall in a peculiar way be “taught of God”—the night of ignorance, the twilight of unbelief shall be taken away, and a flood of glory shall burst upon his redeemed soul. How his heart will then “burn within him” with admiring joy and praise, as Christ, from His radiant throne, opens his understanding to understand the glories of Heaven, and shews him, not what is the “hope,” but what is the *reality* of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory, not of his “*inheritance*,” but of his actual “*possession*” among the saints ! (Ephesians i. 18.) So that again, of the heavenly state, with regard to a certain kind of knowledge, it shall be said “there shall be no night there.”

Again, night or darkness is a symbol of *sin*. Sin is frequently in scripture compared to darkness. There can be no sin in heaven, consequently no night there. Light has always been regarded as an emblem of purity, and therefore the beloved Apostle saith, "*God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.*" "I am the light of the world," said the blessed Jesus, "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." And again, reproving the ungodly, He said, "This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (St. John, viii. 12.—iii. 19.)

That light is an emblem of holiness, and darkness of sin, we may further gather from St. Paul's epistle to the Romans,—“Let us,” saith he, “cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light.” Oh ! my believing brethren, you who are looking forward “to be with Christ,” picture to yourselves with the pleasures of hope, the blessedness of that state of which it can be said *there is no sin there !* Now, the whole creation, every creature, groaneth and travaileth under the pain of sin, both in body and mind, and none feel its misery mentally, so acutely as those who are the most enlightened ; they groan within themselves, waiting for their adoption, to wit, the redemption or resurrection of their bodies ;

they strive against sin, doing the evil they would not, and omitting to do the good they would, so that at times they are "wretched." Can you then describe to me the felicity of that state in which both body and mind will eternally cease to "serve the law of sin," and where it will perpetually serve the holy, just and good law of God? (Romans vii. 12-25.) Oh! the unknown glory that will beam on our souls when the clouds of earth and sin are withdrawn, and the vaulted canopy of heaven is irradiated by the presence of the Son of Righteousness, and that "times and seasons, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night," have all "passed away" among "the former things" of earth, and that all things have become "new," and that there is no sin to trouble, no darkness to becloud the minds of those who enjoy perpetual sunshine!

Lastly, night is an emblem of *death*.

Men in death are said to sleep, and night is the time for sleep, hence night comes to be a symbol of death. There will never be a single death in Heaven! death was the *curse* pronounced on sin by God in Paradise; but in Heaven it is said "there shall be no more curse," consequently there will be no more death—"no *night there*." Alas! now we know that the effect of sin—death—has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned and come

short of the glory of God. Death hath stamped his skeleton foot upon every living creature, and claimed them as his own. We see him grasping the new born infant as mercilessly as the man of three-score years and ten. He comes suddenly as a thief in the night, or gradually, with tardy, lingering steps. None can elude his grasp, sooner or later all must become his prey. Of every one of the long-lived patriarchs, numbering from eight hundred to nine hundred years, it is at last recorded, "and he died;" but of Heaven we have the express word of God to say "there shall be no more *death*, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." When, therefore, you reflect on the cares, and troubles, and anxieties, and pains of this life, and contrast things present with things future, do not *you*, for whom "to live is Christ," do not *you* feel in your souls, that to die will be infinite "gain?" and that the eternal bliss of "the nations that are saved, and who walk in the light" of the golden city, will be so exquisite that you almost long to drop the earthly tabernacle, and be clothed upon with the Heavenly, that you may behold the glory of that state of which it is authoritatively said "*There shall be no night there!*"

And now, my brethren, in conclusion, what think you on this interesting and important subject? It

is a *glorious* subject, and requires an angel's tongue fitly to speak upon it: but it is an *awful* subject too, and should make all of us examine ourselves with fear and trembling. We have been contemplating with hope the pleasures of Heaven. But let us not forget, that if there be a glorious Heaven, there is as surely an awful Hell. A Heaven for those who through repentance and faith in Christ inherit the promises! A Hell for those who, by careless indifference, or bold defiance, live without God in the world!

It will be impossible for me to improve this solemn subject in all its bearings; I will therefore conclude it as briefly as possible. In Heaven we have learnt that there will be *no night there*, for "the glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb will be the light thereof," and where God and His Christ are, there must be a glorious effulgence of beauty and holiness. BUT ALAS! IN HELL IT WILL BE ALL NIGHT THERE! Oh! such a night that has never yet been seen! Is night an emblem of fatigue, peril, ignorance, sin, and death? then what an amount of woe will hell discover! Fatigue without rest; fears and dangers without hope; ignorance without the means of improvement; sin with all its overwhelming pains and sorrows, but none of its earthly pleasures; death, spiritual and eternal, in

that lake "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." Oh! what a long and dreary night will those endure who suffer these things! That night on which the first-born of Egypt were slain, was, we are told, a fearfully dark one; there reigned a darkness, it is said, which *could be felt*. Oh! the mental, moral, intellectual, and perchance literal darkness of hell! *With* the restraining grace of God curbing men's unruly wills and vile affections, how fearful is the state of *earth* even now, *without* it—what will *hell* be?

An officer, lately returned from the North Pole, has said that the cold there was as nothing compared to the long continued darkness. *

If then darkness for a few weeks duration is almost insufferable, what will be the anguish of those who, for sin, will have their portion *for ever* in that region of "outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth!" Let us each pray to Him who is "the light of the world," that He may shine into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus, so that we, by His merits, may become partakers with the saints in light, and shine as the brightness of the firmament, or as the stars for ever and ever in that

* In the winter of 1851 we were 80 days in darkness.—*Dr. Kane.*

city which hath foundations whose maker and builder is God, the streets of which are as pure gold, and transparent glass, clear as crystal; and the glory of God and the Lamb so brilliant, that the truth of the text shall be manifest to all created intelligence—
“there shall be no night there.”



